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SOME NEW PAINTINGS

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COROT, DIAZ, MILLET, FORTUNY

AND TROYON

LATELY RECEIVED BY

M. KNOEDLER & CO.,

170 FIFTH AVE., COR OF 22D ST.

OCTOBER, 1880.

NEW YORK.

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BLACK ART REFERENCE  
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NEW YORK



COROT, DIAZ, MILLET, FORTUNY,  
AND TROYON.

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THE house of KNOEDLER & CO. have very considerable satisfaction in presenting to their patrons many of those famous works of art of the French school, to which French art owes its supremacy. But no men have arisen to take the places of DIAZ, TROYON, ROUSSEAU, MILLET, COROT, and others, and the consequence is, that there has been a very great advance in the prices of such productions. The house of KNOEDLER & CO. have ventured to buy very largely of these superb works, having been taught by the past that they can rely thoroughly upon the high artistic appreciation of their patrons, whose great wealth is equalled by their knowledge of modern art. The house feel assured that their pleasure in offering will be reciprocated by their patrons in seeing, more especially when those who see have the additional satisfaction of knowing that the pictures are within the possibility of their possession. The time must inevitably come when the French nation will rise up indignantly and demand why the "Knitting Lesson" of JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET, and the "Nymphs and Cupids" of DIAZ, have not been placed in the National Museum of Luxembourg; but it will be too late. These pictures are in New York and will stay



here. Never before in the history of KNOEDLER & CO. have they been enabled to present so many works of the very first rank, and they venture to call attention briefly to the merits of some out of the many now in their hands.

## DIAZ.

Of the works of DIAZ, there are three specially famous and beautiful: one, "Nymphs and Cupids" (*l'île des amours*), another, "The Oak Forest," and still another, "Boy with Hunting Dogs." The first is not large in size, but is filled with figures. It represents the home of the nymphs, who are seated in the *deshabille* of the bath around a clear pool. They are in various positions; and DIAZ here rises to the culmination of his quality of graceful drawing, without falling into the prevailing sin of the French school, of being academic. The flesh tints are soft and warm, and of singular purity of tone. Cupids sport about these lovely nymphs in varied attitudes. One leans on the soft lap of a beautiful nymph; another rises in flight from the earth; another braids flowers with a band of bright colors; another hovers in the air and whispers into the ear of an attentive nymph; another soars in the air and seems about to alight on the silken tresses of a young beauty. Two swing themselves on the boughs of the trees, that form at once a background and a curtain. Through the openings of the branches is seen the sky with warm, bright, fleecy clouds. In this picture DIAZ shows himself to be truly a great master. He has obtained all that he sought, namely, the extreme of grace and softness, and warmth of tone. By a perfect balance of warmth and coolness, he has attained a pervading impression of general warmth. The manner, also, of distributing his lights is singularly artistic, and the shadows are full of color. It is a wonderful *tout*



*ensemble* of beauty, of color, softness and grace, and nowhere does DIAZ in this picture, as happens sometimes to him in smaller ones, lose sight of texture in his effort to be soft, and become woolly. The flesh is flesh, and the difference between that of the cupids and that of the blonde and brunette nymphs is worked out most carefully, but the art is so hidden, that all seems a mere matter of course. There is no better example of DIAZ in existence than this picture.

The "Boy with Hunting Dogs," is another masterpiece; but the difficulties to be vanquished here are not so great as in the preceding. To the picture buyer it is equally interesting, to some even more so, for it exhibits fully the sympathy of the artist with nature. How rough in texture, how replete with strength are the trunks of the trees that surround the figures in the centre!

The foreground is delicious, recalling Velasquez, as indeed does much of the picture. The dogs are instinct with vitality, and the texture of their rough skins is given with great power, and with those few strokes of the brush which mean so much in the hand of a master. The sky is low in light, but is crossed with bright gleams and has some peculiar color. It is evidently a study, and the whole picture is full of the inspiration drawn from Nature by a man to whom Nature eagerly showed her charm. "The Oak Forest," by DIAZ, is perhaps finer in some points than the hunting picture. The superb modelling of the trees reveals how great was that strength DIAZ sacrificed to obtain softness. The trunks of the oaks are rugged and stony, and superb in texture; the splitting and peeling bark is more like the actual thing than the finest efforts of professed imitators like Blaise Des Goffe. There is a wonderful garment of greens in the foliage, which is painted with an amount of detail equal to any Pre-Raphaelite, and yet at the same



time with superb breadth. There is not a meaningless stroke in the whole picture; there is not a spot which does not tell its own particular story, and bear its part in the general harmony. This is art indeed. There is a difference between the master and the painter who is only able, let any one compare an oak forest by another artist with this grand masterpiece by DIAZ. One is able, is conscientious, is imbued with a deep love of Nature, comprehends her, endeavors faithfully to reproduce, but—with this result: If he gets detail, he loses breadth; his details obtrude themselves and destroy his composition, and bring about general confusion and spottiness that wearies the eye. If he attempts breadth, he becomes monotonous and meaningless. Men unacquainted with art look at this oak forest and find it so natural that they believe there is nothing in it; no triumph achieved, no difficulty vanquished. But if our connoisseurs of New York are good judges, they will appreciate as it deserves this really marvelous landscape. It is emphatically an astounding production.

#### COROT.

From DIAZ to COROT is a great jump; but the latter must be judged by his successes, not by his failures; and there are some pictures painted by him worthy a high place. His work, generally known as "The Birch Tree," is one of these. It has more composition and less effort than most of his large pictures. It represents a birch tree growing on the banks of a tranquil river, with all its young leaves and tender branches spread out against the sky of a cold spring morning. In the foreground a child gathers flowers among thick bush grass. There is a broad gleam of light upon the river, and beyond come masses of dark foliage, amid which rises, in gleams of white, an Italian villa. The sky



is very subtle—full of underlying tones. It is a good picture,—melancholy, but not cold,—and is the work of a man who loved Nature's semi-tones, and translated them into art with subtlety and success.

## TROYON.

There are also two excellent cattle pieces by TROYON, one of which is of such extraordinary force and beauty that it is incomprehensible how the French could have allowed it to leave the country. It is not a large picture, and therefore may have been deemed less important than some larger ones which remain in France. But this is an error. Those who wish to know what TROYON was must see this picture, for it is his very best. It represents a cow walking placidly along a ditch to enjoy the grateful coolness during the hot summer noon. In this position the green foreground of pasturage and the green immediately behind the ditch actually shut out the cow, and define it, and make it prominent, as effectually as the photographer does his object by his screens. But so artistically is this done that, until the picture is analyzed and broken up into portions, the cause of the wonderful relief and life-like appearance of the cow is not even suspected. It takes its place in the picture, only somehow the eyes of the spectator cannot get away from it. We feel rather than see that there is a middle distance of trees with cows lying down in the shade, and that there is a peasant boy just starting to get the cow out of the comfortable ditch, and that there is a background with trees along the horizon line. But our eyes are fascinated by the russet tones of that cow, and we can only glance at other things. What perfection of coloring, what perfection of modelling! It reminds one of Titian's Venuses. All the changes of the surface are marked by most delicate



gradations of color, by imperceptible shadows. The eye passes from the tail to the head, and can hardly see or comprehend how the artist produced his effects of relief. There is that strange mingling of the power to do ever so much with a single stroke of the brush, and the ability to make the finest, most minute touches, which is the birthright of a great painter. How broad is the shadow projected in the back, how delicate, how finished, how perfect the work on the head, on the tips of the horn, on the rough wet nostril! And then the color! To see it is like drinking wine, for it exhilarates, it makes the blood pulsate more quickly. It is not alone the splendid coloring of the cow, but everywhere, in the luminous green, in the quiet blue sky, in the white shirt-sleeves of the peasant boy. TROYON'S opaque colors seem as full of light as the transparent tones of other men.

The other cattle piece by TROYON represents two cows—one standing, one lying down. Both are instinct with life, both superbly moulded, and there is a mirthful individuality in them. The one lying down regards the spectator with a tranquil, friendly expression; the one standing up glances at him with a red, irritable, sullen eye.

#### FORTUNY.

By rare good fortune KNOEDLER & Co. secured one of the famous works of FORTUNY—the one, indeed, which first secured for him public attention. It represents a fantasia of Bedouins. The caravan has arrived, the travellers have crossed the desert in safety, and have come to a city environed by green hills. In honor of the event, the Bedouins who have conducted the caravan gallop madly in a circle, and discharge their long matchlocks at each other. The scene is graphically rendered. The miserable desert occupies one half the picture, and the green slope the other.



The perils of the one are shown by the skeletons of animals, and in the other is a water course and the crumbling fortifications of a city, whose white domes show above the walls. The forms are full of life and well painted; but the crowning glory of the artist of this century is revealed by the clouds in the background, full of very strong color, and painted with splendid force.

## MILLET.

For the first time important works of JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET appear in this market, and the house in purchasing these masterpieces have given a consummate proof of implicit confidence in the knowledge and artistic appreciation of its patrons. The artistic public of France have awakened to the merits of MILLET, and there is the same feverish, passionate emulation in the purchase of his works which exists in the case of Mariano Fortuny. The oversight of the French government in not purchasing several of his greater works seems extraordinary, since he is the most original artist, the truest, the most noble, that France ever produced; and he lived in such neglect, such obscurity, that he did not paint many pictures. Some of these, purchased by Wm. Hunt, of Boston, were destroyed in the great fire. So that putting one thing with another, the French will have very great difficulty in obtaining, for any public institution, any one of the grander works of this artist. KNOEDLER & CO., besides two exquisite small pictures, have purchased "The Knitting Lesson," one of the largest and grandest pictures extant by MILLET, and, perhaps, his masterpiece. It deserves separate mention, being to the nineteenth century what the works of Giorgione and Titian were to the end of the fifteenth and beginning of sixteenth.



The two small ones are "La Charité" and "The Harvest Moon." In the first, a stout peasant woman is cutting great hunches of bread from an enormous loaf, and giving it to her little girl, that she may feed the miserable beggars outside—an old, baldheaded man carrying a baby in his arms, and a little girl, who runs to him as if to say, "Father, we shall get some bread." These forms are only viewed partially through the open door, but they are so replete with character that they cannot be seen without a pang. The head of the man is intellectual, but it is such in self-abasement; and all the bitterness of helpless poverty is given unmistakably, though the face is hidden. The desperate, wolfish hunger of the little girl is shown by her eager motion, though her face, too, is concealed. The woman who gives the bread to her little girl is stout and commonplace; the face of her offspring is delicate and refined. The story is told perfectly. Often the men who tell their story well are inferior artists. But here the treatment is superior to the story, good as that is. From the open door streams in a light, from the lattice window comes more light, and the room is full of diffused light. These difficulties are so completely vanquished that one does not think of them. The textures are subordinated in the figures, but elsewhere—in the woodwork, in the brick pavement—are superbly rendered. The tones are soft, yet strong; luminous, yet full of color. The gradations are wonderful.

In "The Harvest Moon" a strong, stout peasant woman carries drink to the laborers who are working by the light of a glorious full moon. The radiance floods the air and subdues everything to softness. Even the vulgar form of the woman becomes, in a measure, etherialized and softened. It is a most exquisite little gem. Both show how full was the brain and heart of the artist who painted them.







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